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14. ABSTRACT <p>Within the highest ranks of the Marine Corps, the concept of operational Strategic Communication (SC) appears to be gaining traction; SC will be a topic of discussion during an upcoming Executive Offsite Symposium. Since fall 2009, an SC capabilities development working group has produced a draft functional concept for SC and helped shape the MAGTF Staff Training Program's SC class, but a fielded long-term MAGTF SC solution will likely coincide with the JFCOM's SC Joint Integrating Concept 2016 target operational date, which offers little immediate support in response to enduring real world requirements. The time for action is past due. This paper provides an in-year, executable off the shelf MAGTF SC solution that is required to bridge the gap between 2010 and 2016. The proposed solution offers MAGTF commanders immediate leadership/personnel, integrating solutions to meet tactical SC requirements. Furthermore, this near-term solution will inform and benefit the long-term Joint/service-level development of communication capabilities in support of SC.</p>				
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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MAGTF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:  
OFF THE SHELF MANPOWER SOLUTIONS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

MAJOR JOHN CALDWELL

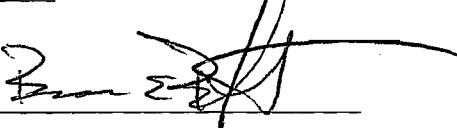
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*Preface*

The production of this paper follows my three years of service as an occupational specialist for Public Affairs (PA) while assigned to the Division of Public Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC). The position I held provided oversight of the PA community's Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF) matters. While not the lead action officer for all of the matters, my position/section was the designated lead for PA DOTMLPF integration and strategic direction. I believe the one persistent issue that most adversely affects the PA community's ability to support tactical to strategic communication efforts is the dearth of PA personnel assigned to operational units. The disproportionate 70/30-percent split of PA billets between supporting establishment and operational units has been at the core of all shortcomings with regard to the occupational field's present operational irrelevance and devolution. There has been no appreciable growth of Marine PA personnel or reorientation of resources and focus in response to the expansion and evolution of the global information environment. The Marine Corps' PA community has diminished in size and remained virtually static in structural organization and function since the Vietnam War when three broadcast networks and a handful of newspapers dominated the news and information environment. This paper cannot address all issues associated with the long-term reengineering of the PA occupational field, but it does articulate a near-term first step. I have identified essential off-the-shelf enablers whose assignment in direct support of operational forces holds promise to positively energize Marine Air Ground Task Force tactical to strategic communication (SC) processes.

The Marine Corps is not alone in failing to articulate and field a comprehensive SC solution. Although nearing signature, both joint and service SC concepts remain in draft form; therefore, commanders are referencing best practices and judgment to address ongoing SC process requirements. This paper includes analysis of SC process matters associated with operations in Afghanistan. This was included for two reasons. First, Marine commanders can be/have been designated Joint Force Commanders, and the analysis provides a snapshot of the complex challenges associated with conducting operational SC, especially in the absence of established DOTMLPF solutions and standards. Second, metrics below the operational level were not readily available to produce analysis of tactical SC-related matters.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my thesis mentors Dr. Douglas Streusand and LtCol. Matt Morgan. For generous reviews and edits, I thank Majors Jeff Pool, Carrie Batson, Chris Devine and LtCol. Matt McLaughlin. Additionally, no enduring progress would be made without the selfless dedication of PA's Capabilities Integration Officer at Marine Corps Combat Development Command Maj. Stuart Fugler.

## Executive Summary

**Title:** MAGTF Strategic Communication: Off The Shelf Manpower Solutions

**Author:** Major John Caldwell, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Former Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) Marketing and Public Affairs (MPA) Marines and Public Affairs' (PA) Special Education Program (SEP) graduates offer Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) proven models to examine and reference during the ongoing development and integration of Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) communication capabilities in support of Strategic Communication (SC); furthermore, these specialized Marines offer operational commanders immediate leadership/personnel, integrating solutions to meet tactical communication requirements while MCCDC follows the Corps' systematic, years-long process required to develop, test, field and fiscally maintain an enduring MAGTF SC solution.

**Discussion:** If the tactical actions of a MAGTF do not communicate or support operational and strategic narrative objectives, then a "say-do gap" exists. At all levels, someone must lead an effective integration process that ensures our nation's narrative is discernable from the United States Government level, down through the operational level, to the point of execution by a "strategic corporal" at the tactical level. The Department of Defense, Department of State and others have endeavored to define a process of integration called Strategic Communication. The Marine Corps defines SC as, "a process by which we integrate activities across all informational functions and engage key audiences to achieve effects consistent with Marine Corps interests, policies and objectives." The Marine Corps' Title 10-centric definition represents the end of official guidance applicable to MAGTFs in operational environs. The Marine Corps has not articulated in doctrine or via practice an operational SC process, and a comprehensive solution is years away. Presently, the Corps possesses many of the key tactical communication drivers associated with an operational SC process -- such as, Information Operations, Civil Affairs (CA) and PA -- but they are loosely integrated at best.

**Conclusion:** On the enlisted side, personnel who have recently completed successful tours as MCRC MPAs represent a model and an interim manpower solution for the execution of integrated strategic engagement and communication activities at the battalion and regimental level. On the officer side, Mass Communication Specialists, PA's SEP graduates, possess the requisite knowledge and skills to research, plan, implement and assess SC efforts at the Marine Expeditionary Brigade and Force level. Upon assimilation with Marine Corps Information Operations Center's deployable training and support teams, former MCRC MPAs and PA's SEP graduates will offer MAGTF commanders immediate leadership/personnel, integrating solutions to meet tactical SC requirements. Furthermore, this near-term solution will inform and benefit the long-term Joint/service-level development of communication capabilities in support of SC.

## Introduction:

If the tactical actions of a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) do not communicate or support operational and strategic narrative objectives, then a say-do gap exists. At all levels, someone must lead an effective integration process that ensures our nation's narrative is discernable from the United States Government (USG) level, down through the operational level, to the point of execution by a "strategic corporal" at the tactical level. In an effort to bridge the say-do gap, the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of State (DOS) and others have endeavored to define a process of integration called Strategic Communication (SC). The Marine Corps defines SC as, "a process by which we integrate activities across all informational functions and engage key audiences to achieve effects consistent with Marine Corps interests, policies and objectives."<sup>1</sup> The Marine Corps' Title 10-centric definition represents the end of official guidance applicable to MAGTFs in operational environs. The Marine Corps has not articulated in doctrine or via practice an operational strategic communication (SC) process, and a comprehensive solution is years away.<sup>2</sup> Presently, the Corps possesses many of the key tactical communication drivers associated with an operational SC process -- such as, Information Operations (IO), Public Affairs (PA) and Civil Affairs (CA) -- but they are loosely integrated at

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<sup>1</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Strategic Communication Plan*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, July 2007), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Communication is defined by DOD as, "Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power." Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\\_dictionary/data/s/18179.html](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/s/18179.html) (accessed Jan. 18, 2010)

best.<sup>3</sup> What's immediately required is an acceptable and effective off the shelf personnel and leadership solution that can integrate MAGTF communication capabilities that support the SC process in an operational environment and deliver positive tactical results. On the enlisted side, personnel who have recently completed successful tours as Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) Marketing and Public Affairs (MPA) Marines represent a model and an interim manpower solution for the execution of integrated strategic engagement and communication activities at the battalion and regimental level. On the officer side, Mass Communication Specialists, Public Affairs' (PA) special education program (SEP) graduates, possess the requisite knowledge and skills to research, plan, implement and assess SC efforts at the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) and Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level.<sup>4</sup> For decades, MPAs have functioned nationwide at the recruiting station level, planning and coordinating tactical engagement and communication activities in support of the Marine Corps' national recruiting strategy and regional operational plans. Concurrently, PA's SEP graduates have employed their enhanced skills primarily in traditional PA officer (PAO) supporting establishment (base/station) assignments, which has delivered negligible benefit to MAGTF

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<sup>3</sup> Defense Support of Public Diplomacy (DPSD) is another SC enabler. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, JP 5-0, December 26, 2006, pg. B-18, para 'a'. It is arguable that Training and Education Command's Security Cooperation Education and Training Center (SCETC) is USMC's persistent contribution to DPSD. SCETC is responsible for implementing and evaluating Marine Corps Security Cooperation education and training programs in order to support Marine Component Commands efforts to Build Partner Capacity. <http://scetc.tecom.usmc.mil/scetchome.asp> (site accessed Jan. 20, 2010)

<sup>4</sup> "Strategic engagement and communication" is a current, refined descriptive title used at the DOD level when referencing strategic communication. U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Strategic Communication*, (working paper, Washington, DC: DOD, December, 2009), 2

communication efforts.<sup>5</sup> Former MCRC MPAs and PA's SEP graduates offer Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) proven models to examine and reference during the ongoing development and integration of MAGTF communication capabilities in support of SC; furthermore, these specialized Marines offer operational commanders immediate leadership/personnel, integrating solutions to meet tactical communication requirements while MCCDC follows the Corps' systematic, years-long process required to develop, test, field and fiscally maintain an enduring MAGTF SC solution.

Structure of the paper:

This paper begins with a survey and relevant analysis of ongoing DOD and Marine SC efforts. From there, this work will examine MCRC MPA capabilities and tactical operations that support SC. The MPA SC example is followed by an introduction to PA Mass Communication Specialists' capabilities and present employment. The subsequent section provides a potential near-term course of action for integrating the two personnel resources with current MAGTF informational capabilities. The actionable concept/roadmap is provided in order to bridge the gap between present and near-term SC requirements and the fielding of an enduring MAGTF SC solution resultant of the multi-phased, time-intensive Marine Corps Expeditionary Force Development System (EFDS) process.

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<sup>5</sup> The author of this paper served as an occupational field specialist within the Division of Public Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2006-2009. He has firsthand knowledge of the MOS' structure and manning issues. Additionally, the author served as a Recruiting District Public Affairs Officer from 2002-2005, where his duties included the provision of support and guidance to eight recruiting station MPAs.

## DOD/Joint SC status overview:

Presently, DOD and the service components lack SC doctrine and the necessary resources to effectively communicate in an operational environment. Leaders and subject matter experts readily admit our nation's present adversaries are quite adept at communicating their message; nonetheless, the USG/DOD has been slow to integrate and evolve/expand capabilities, such as PA and IO, to gain the advantage in the informational environment. This is the case in spite of the fact that the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), subsequent 2006 QDR SC Execution Roadmap, and Secretary of Defense's 2008 Guidance for Development of the Force (GDF) directed specific and timely actions in order to address DOD/component SC deficiencies.<sup>6</sup> The most promising advance to date is United States Joint Forces Command's (USJFCOM) production of a draft SC Joint Integrating Concept (JIC):<sup>7</sup>

- The draft JIC describes how a Joint Force Commander (JFC) might plan and execute operations to achieve "whole of government" SC/national objectives (circa 2016-2028).
- The draft SC JIC was approved by the Building Partnerships (BP) Functional Capabilities Board (FCB) in September 2008; however, Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) approval is pending the results of an ongoing Joint Capabilities Integration System (JCIDS) required SC Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA).
- The SC CBA has identified capability gaps sufficient in magnitude to likely require a Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities (DOTMLPF) change request (DCR).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: DOD, Feb. 6, 2006), 14; DOD, Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Strategic Communication (SC) Execution Roadmap*, (Washington, DC: DOD, Sept. 25, 2006); and Secretary of Defense, "Guidance for Development of the Force, Fiscal Years 2010-2015," (Washington, DC: April 2008), Sect. 6.7.2

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Joint Force Command, *Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept*, (Draft Concept, Version 0.9, JFCOM: August 26, 2008); and Maj. Stuart Fugler, *USMC participation in United States Strategic Command's Strategic Communication (SC) Capabilities-Based Assessment (CBA)*, (Executive Summary, MCCDC, CD&I/CDD/FMID: Dec. 22, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Maj. Stuart Fugler, *Strategic Communication (SC) CBA Study Plan Brief to Mr. Doetzer, USMC rep to JCB on 11 Sep 09*, (Executive Summary, MCCDC, CD&I/CDD/FMID: Sep. 4, 2009) 1-2; and Ibid.

The end result of this ongoing effort is a distant solution; 2016 is the draft JIC stated operationally functional capability start date. The future of SC is further complicated by wrangling at the highest level within DOD over the definition, process and validity of SC.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Adm. Michael Mullen has repeatedly argued that “strategic communication” is problematic for the following three reasons: first, its name -- “strategic” -- is an incorrect adjective because there are no barriers between levels of war/operations with regard to communication; second, its implementation has been arrogant and flawed in that “(we) believe that messages are something we can launch downrange like a rocket,” which undermines the two-way nature of communication; and, finally, that SC requires no new structure because it should be viewed as a process of integration and coordination, vice an organization or capability unto itself.<sup>9</sup> In apparent discord, the 2010 QDR makes reference to “key capabilities” associated with the SC. The report clearly communicates the anticipated longevity and relevance of an SC process.

DOD will continue to improve key capabilities that support strategic communication. Effective strategic communication requires close collaboration across interagency lines at all stages, and DOD works particularly closely with the Department of State to support State’s core role in communicating with foreign governments and international publics. Effective strategic communication also requires the orchestration of multiple lines of operation. Chief among these are policy implementation, force employment, information operations, public affairs, civil affairs, and public diplomacy and engagement. Together, the effects of these activities support national objectives. Strategic communication is essential in COIN, (counter terrorism), and stability operations, where population and stakeholder beliefs and perceptions are crucial to our success, and where

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<sup>9</sup> Adm. Michael Mullen, “Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 55, (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2009): 2, 4; and DOD, *Report on Strategic Communication*.

adversaries often enjoy the advantage of greater local knowledge and calibrate their activities to achieve sophisticated information objectives.<sup>10</sup>

In the near term, forces abroad must endeavor to be relevant and effective in the (physical/informational/cognitive) domains of the information environment. Joint forces do so with a non-doctrinal SC handbook, scattered doctrinal SC references, and field-developed organizational structures required to perform necessary research and assessments in support of the implementation of integrated and synchronized SC plans.

In September 2009, approximately one month after Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, Commander, ISAF/USFOR-A, published his initial assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press released the results of a U.S. survey they conducted September 10th-15th. Fifty percent of the respondents declared support for a continued U.S. and NATO presence in Afghanistan, and 43 percent expressed their desire for the removal of troops as soon as possible. More telling were respondents' divided perspectives regarding the progress made toward major goals (report extract below).<sup>11</sup>

Views of U.S. Progress in Afghanistan			
	Making progress %	Losing ground %	No change/ DK %
Training Afghan security forces	51	28	21=100
Promoting economic development	44	35	21=100
Establishing democracy	42	41	17=100
Defeating the Taliban militarily	41	42	17=100
Reducing civilian casualties	37	43	19=100

Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. QUS51a-e.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, DC: DOD, Feb. 2010), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Pew Research Center, Research Center for the People & the Press, "Public Support for Afghanistan War Wanes," *PewResearch.org*, September 22, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1349/support-falls-afghanistan-war-troop-removal> (site accessed Jan. 16, 2010)

While the poll results spoke to U.S. perspectives exclusively, a related 2009 Pew Global Attitudes Project study showed Israel and the U.S. at 59 percent and 57 percent respectively in support of keeping troops in Afghanistan, while the bottom ranked country out of 25 surveyed, Pakistan, only reported four percent support for U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. Most European/NATO troop-providing countries demonstrated at least 40 percent support for the mission. The only regional country surveyed that registered support above 40 percent was India.<sup>12</sup>

The poll results, combined with McChrystal's summertime assessment, provide significant evidence that the USG's efforts in Afghanistan have not garnered necessary public understanding and support.<sup>13</sup> McChrystal's report addressed the promising USG's Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan for Afghanistan that was published in August, which provides an actionable and assessable way forward. Reporting is a key component of the integrated plan and is described as follows:

The USG will assess progress on the Integrated Civ-Mil Campaign Plan quarterly. This assessment will be done in close coordination between US Embassy, ISAF, and USFOR-A. The purpose of the assessment process is two-fold: 1) to provide decision-makers in Afghanistan with necessary information to prioritize and direct allocation of resources and efforts, and 2) inform Washington decision-making through integrated reporting.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Pew Research Center, Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Support for War in Afghanistan," *PewGlobal.org*, <http://pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=9&mode=chart> (site accessed Jan. 16, 2010)

<sup>13</sup> "Commander's Initial Assessment," August 30, 2009, Commander NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan/U.S. Forces, Afghanistan.

<sup>14</sup> "United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan," August 10, 2009, Embassy of the United States of America, Kabul, and U.S. Forces, Afghanistan, 31.

The maturing nature of this endeavor is further illustrated by the subsequent articulation of a need for more manpower and resources in order to accomplish the reporting requirements.

It is arguable that if the following knowledge of conditions in Afghanistan were common, public opinion and understanding of NATO/U.S. efforts would be positively affected:

Afghan Security Force status:

- As of 20 November 2009, the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) has an actual strength of 97,200 personnel. This represents more than 70 percent of the target strength of 134,000, which is scheduled to be reached by October 2010.
- ANA participates in 90 percent of ISAF operations and leads 62 percent of joint operations.<sup>15</sup>
- As of 20 November, the Afghan National Police (ANP) numbers 93,800. This represents more than 96 percent of the target strength of 96,800.
- The ANP is capable of basic law and order operations in 24 of Afghanistan's 365 districts, 41 districts with advisors, and 91 others with international assistance. ANP capability development continues to lag behind that of the ANA. Building the ANP requires not just providing substantive training, improving literacy, and building leadership, but also reducing corruption.<sup>16</sup>

U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) impact at a glance:

- Infant mortality rate has dropped by 22 percent.
- Over 85 percent of the population now has access to some form of health care.
- Over 50 percent of the judiciary has been trained through USAID-sponsored programs.
- More than 70,000 loans have been extended to women-owned businesses.
- Four mobile phone companies with over 6.5 million subscribers.
- Under the Taliban, only 900,000 boys and no girls were enrolled in schools. Today, as a result of efforts by the Afghan government, the U.S., and other donors, more than six million children are in school. A third of them are girls.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> ISAF, "Facts and Figures: Afghan National Army, December 2009," *ISAF.NATO.int*, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Dec%202009-Fact%20Sheet%20ANA.pdf> (site accessed Jan. 18, 2010)

<sup>16</sup> ISAF, "Facts and Figures: Afghan National Police, December 2009," *ISAF.NATO.int*, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Dec%202009-Fact%20Sheet%20ANP2.pdf> (accessed Jan. 18, 2010)

<sup>17</sup> USAID, "USAID, Afghanistan Strategy," *USAID.gov*, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Page.CountryOverview.aspx> (site accessed Jan. 18, 2010)

A key component to McChrystal's assessment and plan is the expansion of communication efforts, which has potential to increase public knowledge of the aforementioned progress. McChrystal's initial commander's assessment report includes an SC annex that is fourth in precedence, following Military Plans, Command and Control/Command Relationships and the USG Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan. The SC annex states up front, "The information domain is a battlespace, and it is one in which ISAF must take aggressive actions to win the important battle of perception." Although the plan articulates specific, supporting SC objectives, it provides clear guidance with regard to SC's function: "StratCom should not be a separate Line of Operation, but rather an integral and fully embedded part of policy development, planning processes, and the execution of operations." It further states as the main effort, the "Afghan population's positive perception of, and support for, (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA)) institutions and the constructive supporting role played by ISAF and the (international community)."<sup>18</sup> Although it was not specifically stated in the SC annex, critical to the projection of a focused USG effort in Afghanistan will be the dedication of required resources (both ISAF and GIRoA) to effectively communicate progress toward the 11 counterinsurgency (COIN) Transformative Effects articulated in the USG Civ-Mil plan ("Claiming the Information Initiative" is listed as number two of the 11 effects).<sup>19</sup> The Transformative Effects include clearly articulated time-phased tangible objectives that will

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<sup>18</sup> Commander, *Assessment*, D-1 to D-2.

<sup>19</sup> McChrystal's articulation of a requirement for additional resources to implement necessary communication activities is at odds with CJS's position that SC is simply an integrating process that requires no new organizational structure. This contradiction of opinions at the highest levels has not expedited the development and capabilities of operational SC doctrine and resources.

benefit from a mandated whole-of-government "... focus to deliver results for the population ... across the Security, Development, and Governance Lines of Operation." All communication methods -- to include word-of-mouth in Afghanistan, new media technologies, and congressional testimony -- must be considered and employed in order to achieve the SC annex's main objective and address the negative, uniformed opinions reported in referenced polls and reports.<sup>20</sup>

Analysis provided by Gen. McChrystal and the nonpartisan "fact tank" Pew Research Center combine to provide clear evidence that the USG has not projected a united effort in Afghanistan to date. Public opinion and confidence, at home and abroad, has not been shaped by clear and convincing evidence of relevant and meaningful progress.

The framing and analysis of SC matters related to Afghanistan are provided to evidence the complex nature of associated endeavors, which are further exacerbated by the seemingly glacial pace of DOD SC capabilities development. Fortunately, all services stand to benefit from the JROC's near term anticipated validation of the Joint SC CBA results and the overarching SC JIC. The results should be utilized to establish component/agency baseline SC standards, inform integrated capabilities development processes, and improve operational effectiveness, which leads to the following assessment of Marine Corps SC readiness.

#### USMC SC status overview:

In 2007, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) Gen. James T. Conway published a Green Letter titled *Strategic Communication* that concisely described his perspective on the matter. Conway highlighted the proactive advantage of synchronizing words and actions during operational and service-level planning processes. He identified key contributors and

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<sup>20</sup> Commander, Assessment, C-1.

stakeholders in operational and headquarters environs (such as IO, CA, PA, Legislative Affairs and Recruiting), but CMC made clear his position that SC is a commander's responsibility. The Commandant's letter concludes with the following three directed actions: first, the establishment of a service-level SC council; second, the development of systems/processes (calendars) to inform Marines, family members and the public of planned Marine Corps' engagement opportunities; and finally, CMC directed all Marine general officers to routinely travel outside their immediate area and engage key audiences in order to discuss the Marine Corps' mission, values and policies.<sup>21</sup> While CMC's letter and subsequent SC plan directly influenced service-level Title 10 activities, they achieved no immediate or commensurate impact on MAGTF SC capabilities development.

It was not until the SC JIC entered the CBA process mid-2009 that MCCDC seized ownership of SC. Concurrent with Marine action officers' participation in the ongoing Joint SC CBA, LtGen. George J. Flynn, Deputy Commandant (DC), Capabilities Development and Integration (CD&I), MCCDC, established a MAGTF SC DOTMLPF-Policy Working Group (DWG) for the following purpose:

“(To) realign MAGTF SC capability integration responsibilities to DC, CD&I; provide a framework by which the SC DWG will provide subject matter expertise to fully support the Joint SC CBA effort; develop a relevant concept for “MAGTF SC;” and, properly represent USMC SC equities within the (Expeditionary Force Development System (EFDS).”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, Green Letter 01-07, “*Strategic Communication*,” (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 16 Feb 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration, “*Charter for the establishment of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Strategic Communication Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLF-P) Working Group*,” (Quantico, VA: MCCDC, Nov. 19, 2009), 2.

The SC DWG charter specifically identifies DC, CD&I as the MAGTF's advocate for SC, and outlines the composition of the Executive Steering Group (ESG) that will guide DWG efforts. The ESG consists of colonel-level leadership from the MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP), Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), Headquarters Marine Corps' (HQMC) Division of PA (DIVPA), Marine Corps Systems Command, and the Marine Corps Information Operations Center (MCIOC).

Apart from the recent establishment of the SC DWG, the MCIOC is USMC's only recent development in support of operational SC. The MCIOC is not USMC's stated operational SC solution, but it includes representatives from the aforementioned information capabilities that support SC (i.e. PA and IO). Unlike the Army's separate IO, PA, Civil Affairs (CA) and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) commands, MCIOC consolidates the Corps' organic, related and supporting IO capabilities under one roof.<sup>23</sup> MCIOC, which opened its doors in October 2009 and achieved initial operating capacity in January 2010, task organizes regionally-focused training and/or support teams to provide MAGTFs with IO predeployment and/or operational support.<sup>24</sup> An inherent limitation of MCIOC's deployable training and support teams is the

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<sup>23</sup> Perceptions of IO are often framed by one of its core capabilities, specifically PSYOP. IO is more comprehensively defined as "the integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own." Psychological operations are "planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives." Joint Publication 1-02, *"Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,"* [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\\_dictionary/index.html](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html) (site accessed Jan. 18, 2010)

<sup>24</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Information Operations Program (Short Title: MCIOP)*, MCO 3120.10, June 30, 2008.

absence of PA personnel who are trained and doctrinally charged to develop and maintain relations with all publics, to include foreign, domestic, friendly, neutral and adversarial.<sup>25</sup>

One way to leverage such relationships is through traditional media. Marine COIN doctrine clearly states, “The media are a permanent part of the information environment. Effective media/public affairs operations are critical to successful military operations.”<sup>26</sup> Engaging media and facilitating embeds are integral components of communication activities (and a core competency of PA); however, the Corps’ COIN doctrine cautions commanders regarding the perceived or actual manipulation of media. A loss of integrity has potential to negatively impact a commander’s ability to communicate with target audiences via the media, which is why PA specialists, vice IO or PSYOP Marines, are the doctrinally specified choice to manage media engagement efforts.<sup>27</sup> Identifying PA Marines best qualified to augment MCIOC’s support teams and facilitate MAGTF commanders’ communication planning and integration is the focus of the following two sections.

#### MCRC MPA’s tactical SC capabilities:

For decades, MCRC’s Recruiting Station (RS) MPAs have been charged with the research, planning, coordination/implementation, and evaluation of tactical level communication and engagement activities in support of SC. MPA’s tactical plans and activities are shaped and

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<sup>25</sup> MCIOC’s personnel planners were not provided a blank check by the Marine Corps’ 202K buildup; therefore, only one PA structured billet was allocated to the center, an O2 4302 PAO, which is woefully inadequate to provide PA SME representation on all training and support missions.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, and Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 or MCWP 3-33.5, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 2006) 5-10, para. 5-28.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Pg. 5-11 to 5-12, paras. 5-26 to 5-34; and JP 3-61, “Public Affairs,” (Virginia: JFCOM, May 9, 2005), xi.

influenced by MCRC's national strategy and fiscal year (FY) Recruitment Advertising Plan (RAP). An MPA must also ensure RS plans and activities reflect guidance and support provided by their District's FY RAP. The annual production of an RS RAP requires the lateral and vertical integration of efforts, and it is a budget and resource-intensive process. MPA Marines are trained and supported, as required, to accomplish the task.<sup>28</sup> An MPA's mastery of this planning process is reliant upon a keen understanding of what is truly effective at the tactical level. Thirty-six months of RS-level communication and engagement activity management develops the necessary skill set to inform such tactical perception and ultimately expands the MPA's capability set beyond that of their primary military occupational specialty (PMOS) 4341 Combat Correspondent.

During Marine Corps Command and Staff College's academic year 2005-6, LtCol. Daniel Q. Greenwood noted in his Master's Thesis the value and portability of an MPA's skill set in an operational environment.

The Marine Corps Recruiting Command employs E-5 Sergeant Marketing/Public Affairs (MPA) specialists at all 48 recruiting stations throughout the nation. Arguably one of the most valuable members of the command, these junior Marines combine their initial public affairs training with imagination, initiative, and hard work to interact with the local population, schools, and the media telling the Marine Corps story. This same approach should be employed at the tactical level within the COIN environment.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The following reference is currently under revision; therefore, the citation reflects what is presently hung on [www.marines.mil](http://www.marines.mil). The content of the draft and standing orders in the noted sections is consistent in spirit and most wording. Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Marine Corps Recruiting Marketing and Public Affairs*, MCO P5720.75, February 19, 1999, 2-6 to 2-7, Sects. 2006 and 2008.

<sup>29</sup> LtCol. Daniel Q. Greenwood, "Combined Action Counterinsurgency Concept (CACC): A Proposed Framework for Future Counterinsurgency Operations," (Masters Thesis, Marine Corps University, 2005-6), Footnote 38, 21.

Combat correspondents and/or broadcasters are trained to gather and produce news products for delivery to a wide variety of audiences via a broadening spectrum of conventional and new media means. Additionally, they're capable of providing informed and capable support throughout the range of traditional PA activities, such as command information, community engagement and public information.<sup>30</sup> Primarily at the rank of sergeant, combat correspondents serving as RS MPAs provide the primary source of PA and marketing advice and support to tactical level commanders. While provided access to district-level PA and marketing support, MPAs are expected to research, develop and/or manage numerous programs or efforts essentially independently. Examples are as follows:<sup>31</sup>

- Serve as the local primary media program coordinator and perform duties directly related to external and internal information and community relations.
- Prepare Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) as necessary or as directed by higher headquarters.
- Serve as the lead unit representative for local media queries, providing media assistance, interview coordination, and information for the RS.
- Assist Recruiting Substation (RSS) staff noncommissioned officers in charge (SNCOICs) and officer selection officers (OSOs) in maintaining proactive relationships with local media and conducting media visits.
- Assist SNCOICs in conducting public service announcement (PSA) visits and coordinate Recruiter Production Packages (RPP).<sup>32</sup>
- Coordinate with the contracted advertising agency for local media negotiations and advertisement purchases.
- Coordinate the RS Educator Workshop program.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *"Public Affairs Training and Readiness Manual, (Short Title: PA T&R Manual)"*, NAVMC 3500.9, March 14, 2007, Chapters 5-6.

<sup>31</sup> Commandant, MPA "SOP," pgs. 2-7 to 2-9.

<sup>32</sup> RPPs are locally produced PSAs featuring recruiters and are intended for airing on TV or radio stations within the recruiters AOR.

<sup>33</sup> Educator workshops involve the annual selection/hosting of primarily high school/community college teachers/administrative personnel for a weeklong visit aboard one of the two Marine Recruit Depots. This, along with Center of Influence programs, which are contrived events with the intent of establishing relationships

- Serve as the primary liaison with civilian sponsors throughout the RS area requesting ceremonial support, such as bands, aviation requests and demonstration platoons.
- Assist recruiters and OSO's in coordinating Enhanced Area Canvassing (EAC) activities and other lead-generating opportunities within their area of responsibility (AOR).
- Assist the executive officer and SNCOIC's in implementing the High School Awards Program.

While not entirely inclusive, the above list of MPA activities effectively demonstrates the complex and operationally integrated array of communication/engagement activities administered by these specialized PA Marines. The following list provides the hypothetical translation of abovementioned MPA duties for a tactical environment:

- Identify/establish timely and effective communication methods with key leadership in AOR in order to facilitate public information and community engagement activities.
- Train and assist small unit level leaders to engage and maintain effective relations with nascent or mature media presence in the AOR.
- Produce proactive and responsive tactical PAG, which includes integrated command messages and talking points, to support operational objectives by outpacing/counteracting enemy propaganda and shaping (with factual information) key leaders' perceptions of the MAGTF's purpose and intent.
- Identify and facilitate effective communication and engagement opportunities with key leadership and media within the AOR in order to support MAGTF objectives.
  - Examples include (security situational dependant): the sponsorship of community sporting events, coordination of media roundtables with civic leaders, and public information workshops for security force and municipal authorities.
- Produce an integrated/synchronized tactical communication and engagement plan that incorporates available information environment analysis (such as established AO/theater media monitoring and assessments, communication infrastructure (beyond technology, how people in the AO exchange information) and available MAGTF resources (i.e. MCIOC's radios in a box, PA's or combat camera's video/imagery transmission/production systems).

The final bullet is based on the concept of an MPA's RAP production. Whereas in the recruiting environment the MPA would embrace the support of contracted advertising agency and higher

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between recruiters and their AOR's leadership, represent two examples of tactical engagements that are inextricably linked with USMC's national recruiting and SC strategies/plans.

headquarters resources to complete this planning product, the PA subject matter expert (SME) discussed in the following section would provide necessary higher headquarters oversight and guidance during planning processes in an operational environment.

**PA Mass Communication Specialists' capabilities and present employment:**

Mass Communication Specialists (additional MOS 4305) are PAOs who have completed Marine Corps PA's SEP requirements and earned a Master of Arts degree in communication with a specialization in public relations from San Diego State University's (SDSU) School of Journalism & Media Studies. The intent is for all mass communication specialists to serve in billets that require strategic planning, research and analysis, and the application of communication theories. In theory, the specified payback tour billets were argued to require advanced knowledge and understanding of strategic military public affairs; public relations; and organizational, mass and intercultural communication.<sup>34</sup> In practice, the handful of SEP payback billets sprinkled throughout the Corps are indistinguishable from commensurate PMOS/grade level assignments; the one exception is the company grade SEP payback billet located within the three-person SC Secretariat at HQMC. Only one of the five SEP billets is located in the operational Marine Corps, a captain's billet within 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division Headquarters.

The tailored "Military PAO Program" at SDSU provides SEP students (primarily Navy and Marine) with a broad but relevant spectrum of specialization and elective courses to explore. Students are required to complete seminars in core mass communication theories, quantitative and qualitative research methods, and communication planning. Collectively, these three areas

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<sup>34</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, "Military Occupational Specialties Manual (Short Title: MOS Manual)," MCO 1200.17A, June 4, 2009, pg. 1-131.

ensure all graduates are competent, conversant and capable in the following communication disciplines:

- Contemporary and emergent communication theory.
- Methods and tools of inquiry in communication research. Survey and experimental methods, conversation analysis, ethnographic, theoretical, critical and rhetorical studies.
- Research design, computer statistical analysis, and reporting of survey, content analysis, and experimental studies.<sup>35</sup>

In total, the SDSU graduate program, shaped by Marine PA planners, ensures graduates can accomplish the following advanced communication tasks:

- Lead SC planning efforts, such as communication operational planning teams, and participate in policy development, all with the intent to ensure alignment between what the Marine Corps says and does.
- Develop SC plans that encompass research, planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Integrate communication planning vertically between commands and horizontally across staff agencies in order to synchronize communication efforts and ensure the Marine Corps speaks with one voice.
- Conduct (or analyze third-party) quantitative and qualitative research to ensure the correct messages are being communicated to targeted audiences through appropriate means (i.e. media, key leadership engagements) on time to achieve desired effects.<sup>36</sup>

The advanced practical knowledge and skills acquired by PA SEP grads compounded by an average of 10 years Marine PA experience suggests a level of effectiveness in communication and engagement planning/program management heretofore unknown to MAGTF commanders.

The section that follows provides a potential near-term course of action for integrating the two personnel resources described above with current MAGTF informational capabilities in advance of JFCOM's operational SC target date of 2016 and MCCDC SC DWG's unstated capability development process goals.

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<sup>35</sup> San Diego State University, "Military PAO Program," [http://jms.sdsu.edu/prospective\\_students/graduate/grad\\_curriculum.html](http://jms.sdsu.edu/prospective_students/graduate/grad_curriculum.html), (site accessed Jan. 21, 2010)

<sup>36</sup> Commandant, "MOS Manual," pg. 1-131.

Off the shelf solution to integrate available MAGTF SC resources:

Situation. The MCIOC achieved initial operating capacity in January 2010. As noted previously, its resident, deployable IO training and support capabilities represent one of the communication capabilities that enable the SC process (PA is effectively absent). Arguably, MCIOC is the Marine Corps' current bid for operational success in the cognitive domain throughout the range of military operations. Augmenting MCIOC's efforts with the most capable, on-hand resources to address a Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) validated operational capability gap is a logical low-cost, expedient solution. The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos' signature on the MROC's memorandum provided a call for action with regard to solution planning to address the 265 articulated MAGTF capability gaps for POM-12. Within the top tier, just above USMC's PSYOP production gap was the recurring acknowledgement of the dearth of "experience(d) PA personnel deployed with operational forces to support MAGTF communication objectives in (the) global information environment."<sup>37</sup>

Background. Division of Public Affairs, HQMC, has attempted in earnest to reset its percentage of personnel assigned in support of operational forces since 2006. At that time, a comprehensive, balanced reorganization plan was submitted via Total Force Structure Division (TFSD) to the Marine Corps for comment. Concurrently, upon the request of TFSD's Director, a modest request for PA structural growth was submitted to compliment the strengths and mitigate weaknesses of DIVPA's reorganization plan. The combined efforts would have achieved a

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<sup>37</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, "MAGTF GAPS LIST (MGL) FOR POM-12," MROC Decision Memorandum 18-2009, March 27, 2009.

greater than 10 percent growth in PA personnel within the operational Marine Corps and a commensurate reduction to supporting establishment activities. The beneficiaries in the operational forces unanimously supported the effort and the supporting establishment bill payers categorically rejected it. Likewise, the initial request for growth was returned without action from TFSD. Well into 2007 at this time, DIVPA was directed by TFSD leadership to prepare a new proposal for an Uncompensated Review Board (URB) to be held in 2008. Division of Public Affairs complied, the board acknowledged the need for PA growth, the MROC validated the board's results, but PA's request fell below the funding threshold. The Division prepared and submitted a refined request for the 2009 URB but was advised, along with all other submitters, that the combined requests total far exceeded available resources for redistribution so DIVPA withdrew its futile request.

Presently, Marine PA community structure remains 70 percent assigned to the supporting establishment and 30 percent in support of operating forces. Despite the exponential growth of media and information sources over the past 20 years, Marine Corps Public Affairs structure hasn't increased to meet the demand. Since the Gulf War, some 125 enlisted billets have been eliminated. There are less than 100 PAO and 400 enlisted PA billets within the Marine Corps; these figures include joint/multi-service commitments.<sup>38</sup>

Proposed way ahead. The following course of action was developed with the assumption that uncompensated active duty Marine structural growth within MCIOC or elsewhere remains infeasible; therefore, the most tenable solution is to realign existing active duty PA structure and

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<sup>38</sup> Director of Marine Corps Staff, "Public Affairs Uncompensated Review Board Submission," First Endorsement on Dir PA's ltr of 23 March 09, undated. DIVPA's URB submission cover letter, pgs 1-3 detail the background information provided.

backfill the requirement via a Military-Civilian (Mil-Civ) conversion. A contract PA solution is impractical, because contractors are not authorized to function as Navy/Marine command spokespersons. The Mil-Civ conversion will require careful supervision and support from Manpower planners and TFSD analysts to ensure the converted billets are not redistributed elsewhere, potentially in support of another MOS's initiative. The commands from which the officer and enlisted billets are recommended for realignment will benefit from the continuity of service provided a government service employee (especially with regard to long-term issues such as encroachment, BRAC, or environmental concerns). The realigned Marines will flesh out a PA capability on MCIOCs training/support teams, address an MROC validated MAGTF gap and provide a level of tactical SC planning/integration expertise that has yet to be fielded in the Long War (a.k.a. Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)).

The billets recommend for Mil-Civ conversion/realignment to MCIOC are as follows:

- **Officers:** In-year, Marine Corps Installations-East and West PAOs; as soon as practicable, Marine Corps Air Stations Miramar and Cherry Point PAOs.
  - All four are majors' billets and should be designated as 4305 billet MOS (BMOS) positions at MCIOC.
  - Side note: Presently there are no PA majors' billets in the operational Marine Corps; this change would enable required and capable expertise to be pushed forward in support of OCOs.
- **Enlisted:** As soon as practicable, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Blount Island, Marine Corps Base Quantico and DIVPA. Billets selected at these various commands for Mil-Civ conversion should be between the grades of E-8 and E-5.
  - The positions' BMOS at MCIOC will be 4341, with the prerequisite of MPA duty. Presently MPAs do not have designated additional MOS (AMOS) so it's infeasible to apply a necessary MOS (NMOS) to these new MCIOC positions, which would facilitate the rapid identification of potential candidates by monitors; the manual screening of records will be required.

In addition to contributing necessary capabilities to MCIOC's training and support teams, the PA SMEs will serve as key contributors to the efforts of MCCDC's SC DWG, which will effectively shape the Marine Corps' long-term MAGTF SC solution. Indispensible to USMC/DOD/USG SC effectiveness, PA's expanded presence at MCIOC will facilitate the establishment and maintenance of relationships with key SC stakeholders/enablers within DOD/USG.

### Conclusion:

While the name and implementation of SC are widely criticized, most notably by CJCS Adm. Mullen, it is hard to imagine anyone at the highest levels of DOD or the NCA denying the value of deterrence with regard to our National Security Strategy. Deterrence, as it relates to the range of military operations, is most applicable to Phase 0 shaping operations. Shaping is the integration of all things said and done to achieve a desired condition or endstate. The 2010 QDR addresses the Commander in Chief's perspective on SC, "The President's forthcoming report to Congress on U.S. government strategic communication will outline a common vision of interagency collaboration in this area and define the Administration's position on this issue."<sup>39</sup> It is worrisome that debate and direction with regard to SC's role and value lingers on when for years one of our nation's most troublesome adversaries, al-Qaeda, has expressed a keen awareness of the value of dominance in the global information environment. In 2005 al-Qaeda's chief strategist Ayman al-Zawahiri stated, "We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media .... (W)e are in a media battle for the hearts and minds of our *umma* (Muslim world)."<sup>40</sup> At all levels on the U.S. side, someone must manage/lead the

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<sup>39</sup> DOD, *QDR*, 26.

integration process that was the genesis of SC; therefore, whether under the moniker of SC or something else, the requirement for human effort and materiel/analytical resources dedicated to the process of integrating words and deeds from the strategic to tactical levels is nonnegotiable.

Within the highest ranks of the Marine Corps, the concept of operational SC appears to be gaining traction; SC will be a topic of discussion during an upcoming Executive Offsite Symposium.<sup>41</sup> Since fall 2009, MCCDC's MAGTF SC DOTMLPF-P Working Group has produced a draft functional concept for SC and helped shape the MAGTF Staff Training Program's SC class, but a fielded long-term MAGTF SC solution will likely coincide with the JFCOM's SC JIC 2016 target operational date, which offers little immediate support in response to enduring real world requirements.<sup>42</sup> The time for action is past due. This paper provides an in-year, executable off the shelf solution that is required to bridge the gap between 2010 and 2016. Upon assimilation with MCIOC's deployable training and support teams, former MCRC MPAs and PA's SEP graduates will offer MAGTF commanders immediate leadership/personnel, integrating solutions to meet tactical SC requirements. Furthermore, this near-term solution will inform and benefit the long-term Joint/service-level development of communication capabilities in support of SC.

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<sup>40</sup> Marc Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies," *National Interest 'Online'*, March 1, 2006, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=11524> (accessed March 21, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> LtCol. Matt Morgan, telephone conversation with Marine Forces Command PAO, March 16, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Maj. Stuart Fugler, telephone conversation with PA MCCDC CIO, March 18, 2010.

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